

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 HA-05 /091 W
-----029647 112049Z /62

R 101615Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2101
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BL
SUBJECT: THE OPPOSITION HANGS TOUGH

REF: LA PAZ 6301 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IN SEPARATE DECLARATIONS ON AUGUST 8, THE THREE MAJOR
OPPOSITION GROUPS TOOK ISSUE WITH PRESIDENT JUAN PEREDA'S
ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RETURN BOLIVIA TO DEMOCRATIC RULE
WITHIN A TWO-YEAR PERIOD. HE FAN SILES ZUAZO'S UDP AND THE

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC),
WHO BACKED RENE BERNAL IN THE JULY 9 ELECTIONS, REITERATED
THEIR DEMANDS FOR RECONSTITUTIONALIZATION BEFORE 1979, WHILE
VICTOR PAZ
ESTENSSORO'S MNR-PRA ALLIANCE CALLED FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS
WITHIN ONE YEAR. END SUMMARY.

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2. IN A LENGTHY PRESS RELEASE, THE UDP ACCUSED PEREDA OF
ATTEMPTING TO "PROLONG THE DICTATORSHIP UNTIL 1980," AND
WARNED THAT THE BOLIVIAN
PEOPLE HAD REACHED THE "LIMITS OF THEIR SOCIAL TOLERANCE."
THE UDP DOCUMENT ALSO CONTENDED THAT THE COMBINED OPPOSITION
VOTE ON JULY 9 EXCEEDED 70 PERCENT AND THAT THE PEREDA
TICKET DID NOT OBTAIN A "CLEAN" PLURALITY IN ANY DEPARTMENT.

IT CALLED FOR, INTER ALIA:

- PROMPT ELECTIONS AND RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE 1979.
- DEROGATION OF THE STATE OF SEIGE.
- IMMEDIATE CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION.
- A COMMITMENT FROM THE ARMED FORCES TO GUARANTEE THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND TO RESPECT ITS RESULTS.
- A PLEDGE FROM THE GOVERNMENT NOT TO SPONSOR ANY "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE.

3. SPEAKING IN BEHALF OF THE PDC, BENJAMIN MIGUEL TOLD THE PRESS THAT AN IMMEDIATE RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE WAS THE ONLY SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE. HE ADDED THAT FURTHER DELAY MIGHT ONLY PROVOKE A COUP, WHICH IN TURN WOULD LEAD TO A SUCCESSION OF COUPS. THE UDP AND PDC POSITIONS WERE ECHOED BY LEFTIST LABOR LEADER JUAN LECHIN OQUENDO, WHO DECLARED THAT "PEOPLE AND WORKERS WANT CIVILIANS INSTEAD OF GENERALS IN THE GOVERNMENT". LECHIN TERMED PEREDA'S ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HOLDING ELECTIONS WITHIN A TWO-YEAR PERIOD AS MERE "PRETEXTS" TO JUSTIFY HIS CONTINUATION IN POWER.

4. IN ITS DECLARATION, THE MNR-PRA ALLIANCE DESCRIBED PEREDA'S 24-MONTH TIMEFRAME AS "ARBITRARY," AND CALLED FOR A RETURN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO DEMOCRACY "WITHIN 12 MONTHS." IN REMARKS TO THE PRESS, PAZ ESTENSOR, EN ROUTE TO TARIJA FOR A TWO OR THREE MONTH REST, CLARIFIED THAT THE ELECTIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN A PERIOD OF "TEN TO TWELVE" MONTHS, ALLOWING TIME FOR CERTAIN NECESSARY REFORMS. THESE, HE SAID, SHOULD RELATE TO VOTER REGISTRATION, POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZATION, AND BALLOTING PROCEDURES. PAZ REITERATED HIS CLAIM THAT THE MNR-PRA TICKET HAD WON PLURALITIES IN SANTA CRUZ, BENI, PANDO AND TARIJA, AND COMMENTED THAT PEREDA HAD TAKEN BY FORCE WHAT HE HAD BEEN DENIED AT THE POLLS.

5. COMMENT: THE SHARP OPPOSITION REACTION WAS NOT UNEXPECTED, AND MAY NOT PORTEND SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT. THE PAZ COALITION AND THE PDC, DESPITE THEIR RHETORIC, CAN PROBABLY LIVE WITH PEREDA'S 24-MONTH MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME. IF REAL DIFFICULTIES DEVELOP, THEY WILL PROBABLY STEM FROM SILENCE' UDP, WHICH CONTINUES TO VIEW PROMPT ELECTIONS AS THE SUREST PATH TO POLITICAL POWER.
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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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